Mrs. Edith How-Martyn Is Due Today

Famed British Birth Control Leader To Visit Shanghai

PLANNING LECTURE BEFORE Y. W. C. A.

Dr. Amos Wong Gives Movement's Background In China

Arriving this morning aboard the Empress of Canada, Mrs. Edith How-Martyn, former leader of the suffragist movement in England and now Honorary Director of the International Birth Control Information Center, will be a visitor to Shanghai. It is expected that she will remain here for some time to discuss various aspects of the work being done by the Shanghai Birth Control League.

Next Tuesday afternoon at 5.30 o'clock Mrs. How-Martyn will lecture here on "Population and Birth Control" at the Young Women's Christian Association. During the past few months she has lectured in many large cities in India, and has addressed over 45 audiences in the interests of the birth control movement in that country.

It is of interest to note that at this time Dr. Amos Wong, of the National Medical College of Shanghai, has prepared a comprehensive paper, from which the following is an extract, on birth control in China.

To the modern mind the question of contraception should logically have been an important problem in China even before she opened her doors to Western civilization, declared Dr. Wong.

Parents Didn't Worry

Formerly, he continues, the Chinese knew only unreliable methods of birth control and very few mothers practised even these crude methods. In fact, the majority of the mothers of old China did not worry very much about the size of their families and the fathers were even less concerned about this matter. When economic pressure required a reduction of the number of children in a family, infanticide and the giving away of new born daughters was a common practice. The selling of sons was resorted to only when the economic strain became very intense.

[illegible] and this seemingly indifferent attitude, some knowledge of the basic principles of the Chinese family system is necessary. [illegible] is divided into provinces, the [illegible] into hsian and the hsian into [illegible] up to recent [illegible] today, each [illegible] consisted of a [illegible] surname, the [illegible] same ancestor and [illegible] of the clan was treated as a member of the large family.

Any difference of opinion was usually settled in the house of the most senior person of the oldest generation alive so that the legal court, an office of the imperial government, was very seldom used. Naturally, it was the desire of the members of the village that that clan should not only continue to live, but should be increased in size as well as in power. The usual subject matter for boasting among members of different villages besides the size of the endowment fund for the village scholars was the large number of families which made up the clan. This principle of consanguinity was also the basis of marriage.

Early Marriages Cited

Under any circumstances, the continuity of the family and the clan had to be maintained and therefore the question of marriage was not one of the individuals involved, but one of the family or the clan. Many parents would require their sons to marry early (14 years of age) to insure a male descendant of the next generation who would bear the family name.

The wife, of course, had to bear sons in order to fulfill her principal duty and to attain a position of esteem. If she failed, it was her prerogative to give her husband one or more female servants whose children would look up to her, the principle wife, as mother. For support of the offspring of child or junior marriages, the heads of the houses had to assume the responsibility and it was not uncommon to find members of three, four and even five generations living in the same house, eating together, and all working towards the support of this household.

As the children were the burden of the family rather than of the individuals, it was not unusual for one to support his brother's widow and children. It was the father's duty to be benevolent, the son's to venerate the father, the elder brother's to be provident, the younger brother's to be obedient, the husband's to be considerate and the wife's to be submissive. So in old China, the women suffered a good deal of injustice from the day they were born. The boys were property of the clan and later the masters of the families. The problem therefore was not how to prevent conception, but how to conceive boys and not girls.

Mrs. Sanger Here In 1923

The question of birth control is then an important problem of today and a brief resume of what has been done and is being done along this line will be of interest. In the year 1923, Mrs. Margaret Sanger visited this country and gave lectures about the importance of contraception to medical doctors and men, women and students of other professions in the seaport cities of this country. The subject received a great deal of attention especially among the thinking population. However, at that time, medical doctors had not been informed or did not link that work with the sociological needs of this country. With the shortage of trained men in their field, therapeutic work utilised their time and it is only natural that doctors will first engage themselves with medical needs. Also at that time, mothers were still greatly under the influence of old customs and traditions. Therefore, the significance of Mrs. Margaret Sanger's visit was nothing more than an awakening of our people to the fact that there is such a thing as contraception and that one can limit the size of his or her family if he or she so wishes. The idea of birth control was allowed to ferment by itself for a period of nine years.

In the spring of 1930, the importance of contraception was again stressed by a visit from Dr. Sherwood Eddy. Mr. C. H. Lowe, the Industrial Secretary of the Young Men's Christian Association, and Mr. J. W. Nipps took active part in gathering together interested individuals and establishing the Shanghai Birth Control League.

The following year (1931), the industrial department of the Young Men's Christian Association, under the direction of Mr. C. H. Lowe, in their work for the laborers of Shanghai, established a social center at 4200 Robinson Road. Among the four main activities was a family clinic in which contraceptive advice was given by a public health nurse whose salary was met by Mrs. Margaret Sanger. This work was not very active and was finally brought to an end by the sino-Japanese hostilities.

League Reorganized

In April of 1935, the Shanghai Birth Control League was reorganized as a joint project of the Shanghai Birth Control League and the women's Christian Temperance Union under the name of the Shanghai Birth Control Information Bureau. The officers elected were essentially those of the previous organization with Dr. F. C. Yen as President, Mrs. Herman D. C. Liu as Vice-president, and Mr. Wellington Liu as Secretary. Very fortunately, Mrs. Anna Chow offered voluntary full-time service as the Director of the Bureau and has attended to all activities of the Bureau assuming as her duties those of Secretary, Business Manager, and social service worker.

The Shanghai Birth Control Information Bureau first obtained cooperation of Drs. Z. T. Wang, Hannah Hu and Ellen Liang, each of whom supervises a clinic for the giving of contraceptive information and advice. Up to the present (eight months) these three clinics have given advice to about 200 patients who belong mostly to the higher, middle and educated classes. During the first six months, three more doctors, Drs. S. L. Yang, S. C. Soo Ying and Kuo Tai-hua, have trained in this special line and are now also giving contraceptive advice in their offices. The members of the Bureau are now taking steps to bring birth control information and supplies to the mothers of the poor families in Shanghai.

Besides the training of doctors and the dissemination of contraceptive knowledge locally, this Bureau is sending informative answers to letters received from doctors seeking knowledge along "de [illegible]" [illegible] from [illegible] are also [illegible] that [illegible] upon the importance of [illegible] medical guidance. Help is also given to contraceptive clinics and other interested bodies throughout China in obtaining supplies. The work is well started and should continue to gain in strength as the years go on.

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